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0521627389 - The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction - Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell

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The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction

This book offers students and performers a concise overview of historical performance, taking into account the many significant developments that have taken place in the discipline, particularly in the last decade. It addresses practical matters rather than philosophical issues, and guides readers towards further investigation and interpretation of the evidence provided, not only in the various early instrumental and vocal treatises, but also in examples from the mainstream repertory. Designed as a parent volume for the series Cambridge Handbooks to the Historical Performance of Music, it provides an historical basis for artistic decision-making which has as its goal the re-creation of performances as close as possible to the composer's original conception. It relates many of the issues discussed to four major works composed c. 1700–c. 1900, the core period which forms the principal (though not exclusive) focus for the whole project.

COLIN LAWSON is one of Europe's leading period clarinettists. As principal clarinet of The English Concert, The Hanover Band and the London Classical Players, he has recorded extensively and toured worldwide. An avid researcher into performance practice and the history of the clarinet, he is editor of *The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet* and author of *Mozart: Clarinet Concerto* and *Brahms: Clarinet Quintet* in the series Cambridge Music Handbooks. He currently holds the Chair of Performance Studies at Goldsmiths College in the University of London.

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Cambridge Handbooks to the Historical Performance of Music

GENERAL EDITORS Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell

During the last three decades historical performance has become part of mainstream musical life. However, there is as yet no one source from which performers and students can find an overview of the significant issues or glean practical information pertinent to a particular instrument. This series of handbooks guides the modern performer towards the investigation and interpretation of evidence found both in early performance treatises and in the mainstream repertory. Books on individual instruments contain chapters on historical background, equipment, technique and musical style and are illustrated by case studies of significant works in the repertoire. An introductory book provides a more general survey of issues common to all areas of historical performance and will also inform a wide range of students and music lovers.

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and

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Preface

During the course of little more than a generation historical performance has become part of mainstream musical life in many parts of the world. A number of years have passed since it was subjected to formal scrutiny by Nicholas Kenyon and others in his symposium *Authenticity and Early Music* (Oxford, 1988) and Howard Mayer Brown, Stanley Sadie and their colleagues in *Performance Practice* (London, 1989). The numerous important developments since then have yet to be evaluated thoroughly in print, hence the conception of this volume, which offers a concise, newly considered overview of historical performance. It aims to address largely practical matters rather than theoretical or philosophical issues and to guide readers towards further investigation and interpretation of the evidence provided not only in the various instrumental treatises, but also in examples from the mainstream repertory.

The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction has been devised to complement the Cambridge Handbooks to the Historical Performance of Music, a series of short volumes on early music performance which are specific to particular instruments. These handbooks present and interpret evidence from significant primary sources on matters such as technique, style and expression, and (like the present volume) offer suggestions for further reading and study. They also offer guidance on other issues pertinent to the instrument under consideration, including repertory and organology, as well as advice regarding the acquisition of appropriate instruments and accessories. The present volume, however, deals with the more general, large-scale practical issues that need to be addressed in connection with the preparation and execution of performances which are historically informed, yet at the same time individual and vivid. As in each handbook, this volume attempts to put many of the issues discussed into practice by relating them to selected major works c. 1700–c. 1900, the core period which forms the principal (though not exclusive) focus for all these publications.

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Throughout the presentation is descriptive rather than prescriptive, as performing early music involves much more than simply following rules defined in treatises. Appropriately searching questions need to be asked and guidance given as to how and where suitable answers may be sought. Each case study thus demonstrates the application of the technical, interpretative and other principles discussed in different performing situations and in different musical genres. This provides an historical basis for artistic decision-making which has as its goal the re-creation of a performance as close as possible to the composer's original conception.

We have written for all those who are interested in historical performance, whether as professional performers, students, enthusiastic concert-goers, discriminating arm-chair listeners or 'modern' players who seek advice as to those matters of style, approach and general technique that combine to make up a well-grounded, period interpretation. The balance between historical accuracy and practical expediency in early music has varied wildly over the years from one individual and/or ensemble to the next; curiously, however, the general public has remained blissfully unaware of the detail of these variations. Thus, it is hoped that this book will stimulate its readers to contemplate what makes historical performance different, to study the ways and means in which a stylish interpretation may be established and to use them as the historical foundations for artistic decisions in their own performances.

We do not claim that our inevitably broad and summary view of performance practices *c.* 1700–*c.* 1900 incorporates all the answers. But we hope that we have been successful in disseminating important information on various significant issues within the discipline, corrected some misconceptions, shed some light on some grey areas, encouraged further reading on many subjects by way of the copious endnotes and select bibliography, and demonstrated that theoretical data must be interpreted with discrimination and caution in formulating an historically informed performance. Above all, we hope that we have emphasised sufficiently not only that period performance comprises – of necessity – a mixture of factual knowledge and educated guesswork but also that close observance of theorists' rules is no substitute for artistry, taste and musical intelligence in bringing a performance to life; for then, as now, performers have been admired for what they as individuals brought to the music, and it is with them that the final responsibility for convincing historical performance must rest.

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Together we bring to this volume a great deal of experience of professional performance on period instruments. We would like to take this opportunity of acknowledging the influence and inspiration of friends, colleagues and students in many walks of life who have assisted us in the study and practical realisation of historical performance. Among those who have been most influential have been scholars such as Peter le Huray and Peter Williams, directors and performers such as Roy Goodman, Christopher Hogwood, Sigiswald Kuijken, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Roger Norrington, Trevor Pinnock and Jaap Schröder, as well as several instrument makers and a number of postgraduate students. Notwithstanding the fact that we have been willing and grateful recipients of so much advice and guidance, we hold ourselves responsible for the overall content of the text, whose scope has been constrained by the space available. Indeed, several topics outlined here will be explored more fully within the specialist handbooks themselves.

We must also acknowledge the invaluable help of Penny Souster and her team at Cambridge University Press, particularly our painstaking copy-editor Lucy Carolan; finally, thanks are also due to the Department of Music at Cardiff University for granting one of us a most timely period of study leave.